



AARP Montana
30 W. 14th Street
Suite 301
Helena, MT 59601

T 1-866-295-7278
F 406-441-2230
TTY 1-877-434-7598
www.aarp.org/mt

March 3rd 2009

TO: Members of the Senate Taxation Committee

FROM: Joy Bruck, volunteer advocate AARP Montana

RE: SB 317- Increase non-cigarette tobacco taxes

SENATE TAXATION

EXHIBIT NO. 1

DATE 3.3.09

BILL NO. SB 317

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, my name is Joy Bruck and I'm a volunteer advocate for AARP Montana—a non-profit non-partisan organization of 165,000 members in this state. AARP Montana believes that increasing tobacco taxes is a proven way to decrease tobacco use while funding needed programs.

The two programs that this bill would fund are important and both require further funding. The first is the Insure Montana program, which is broadly supported by both health care advocacy groups and business groups: but its waiting list is long and its funding is in jeopardy. We all know how expensive health care premiums can be, and the Insure Montana program is a solution that already has in place proven infrastructure and is just waiting to expand.

The second program this funds, the Community Health Centers, are similarly important. Because these centers offer services on a sliding payment scale and never turn down patients they are critical for uninsured or underinsured Montanans. State funding has been proven to help start more Community Health Centers.

This bill would raise a tax on products known to cause diseases while helping to fund existing programs that help to cut down on the cost of health care. Thank you, and we urge your support for Senate Bill 317.